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SUBJECT: PACOM COMMANDER ADMIRAL FALLON MEETS WITH BEIJING
UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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Summary

1. (SBU) At an upbeat discussion with Beijing University students May 11, Pacific Command Commander Admiral Fallon underlined that the U.S. military's goal in the Asia-Pacific region is to create stable conditions that will allow people to prosper and lead productive lives. Iran and Japan were of prime concern to the students, who asked several questions about each. On Iran, students inquired about the United Nations process and what the United States intends to do if Tehran refuses to relinquish its nuclear program. On Japan, a faculty participant asked about the changing nature of U.S.-Japan military relations. Admiral Fallon said Iran's actions contradict international nonproliferation efforts. The United States and other countries are striving to persuade Iran that it is in its interest to denuclearize. Meanwhile, the aim of U.S.-Japan ties is to advance stability, the Admiral affirmed. Asked what constitutes the biggest challenge to East Asia security, Admiral Fallon pointed to historical issues, noting that excessive focus on past tragedies hinders regional progress. On U.S.-China relations, one student asked about frictions within the U.S. Government on China policy. Interestingly, no one asked any questions about Taiwan. End Summary.

A Receptive Audience

2. (SBU) Admiral Fallon visited the Beijing University School of International Studies (SIS) May 11 for a roundtable discussion with about 30 Chinese undergraduate and graduate students. The participants were polite and receptive. SIS Associate Dean Jia Qingguo moderated the event and Professor Han Hua attended as well. The Admiral's opening remarks stressed that the U.S. military's goal in the Asia-Pacific area is to create stable conditions that will allow the region's people to prosper and lead productive lives. He discussed combating terrorism, developing rapid responses to natural disasters and handling geo-political challenges ranging from Southeast Asia to the Indian Subcontinent.

Iran

13. (SBU) The Iran nuclear issue topped the students' agenda, with the first questioner, a graduate student focusing on the Middle East, asking what the United States plans to do if Iran refuses to abandon its nuclear program. Another student followed up with a question about the United States' approach to the United Nations in the context of Iran. Admiral Fallon emphasized that since the end of the Cold War, the international community has been striving to cut the number of nuclear weapons in the world, thereby reducing the risk of a calamity. That a country such as Iran, hardly a responsible actor on the global stage, is contradicting this trend and seeking a nuclear arsenal is not in the best interest of the international community. Given the history of violence in the Middle East, a nuclear Iran would be dangerous. The United States will continue to work hard with other countries in the UN framework and beyond to persuade Iran to give up its programs, Admiral Fallon stated.

The Perils of History

14. (SBU) An undergraduate asked what Admiral Fallon considers the biggest security challenge facing East Asia. The Admiral pointed to historical issues, asserting that excessive focus on past tragedies hinders regional progress. "I'm aware that the history of the 1930s and 1940s weighs, but it is a different world today," he said. Mindful of the scars of World War II, European countries have grown

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increasingly integrated and work together multilaterally, Admiral Fallon observed. But in the Asia-Pacific region, no such trend has emerged. Countries still deal with each other one-on-one, shying away from working as a group. The Admiral said he and the U.S. Government are prepared to facilitate more multilateral cooperation in the region. The United States has already played a positive role. After World War II, instead of taking a punitive attitude toward Japan, the United States helped the country change its political structure and culture. The result has been phenomenal economic growth and stability from which China has also benefited.

Japan

15. (SBU) Japan figured prominently in a number of questions. SIS Professor Han Hua thanked Admiral Fallon for his optimistic remarks but contended that many challenges remain in the region. Of particular concern to Han is the changing nature of the military relationship between the United States and Japan. Will the Japanese constitution be amended to allow for more aggressive deployments around the world? How will the U.S.-Japanese global military alliance develop? Meanwhile, another student inquired about what the United States would do in the event a conflict erupts between Japan and South Korea over the disputed Liancourt Rocks.

16. (SBU) Admiral Fallon assured the group that U.S. cooperation with Japan is meant to foster stability in the region and beyond. He recalled that in a previous meeting on this visit, a Chinese official charged that Japan's military expenditures are greater than China's. Such concerns are unfounded, the Admiral said, explaining that a large percentage of Japan's defense spending goes to the United States as part of

its security arrangement. In sum, U.S.-Japan cooperation has worked well in helping create stable conditions for development in East Asia. As for the Liancourts, the Admiral said we would encourage the two sides to proceed calmly and reach a fair solution.

U.S.-China Relations

17. (SBU) Turning to U.S.-China bilateral ties, a graduate student asked what differences exist among the branches and departments of the U.S. Government regarding China policy. For example, do the views of military personnel and diplomats differ? Dealing with foreign policy in the U.S. system is a balancing act, Admiral Fallon remarked. There are 535 Members of Congress, each of whom has a home constituency that views China in its own way. As such, it is important to take individual Members' expressions of contentious views in context, the Admiral reasoned. In the end, while a variety of voices chime in on U.S.-China ties, there is a method to the formation of policy. The process involves Congressional testimony (which the Admiral delivers regularly, he said), the passage of laws and other activities. Admiral Fallon said that in his view, the U.S. Government in general is interested in having positive relations with China.

Bases and Training

18. (SBU) A finance major in her junior year asked about the challenges the United States faces maintaining bases in foreign countries, in particular when local populations complain about the military presence. She also asked about the scope and focus of U.S. training operations with other countries. Admiral Fallon specified that the United States has bases in just two Asia-Pacific countries, Japan and South Korea. He differentiated between the reasons for our presence both countries. We have remained in Japan to provide stability in the aftermath of World War II to allow the country to develop. As for South Korea, because an armistice as opposed to a formal peace treaty ended hostilities in 1953, our forces stay in South Korea to defend the country in case of

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invasion from the North. Nonetheless, the number of troops has diminished considerably in both Japan and South Korea in recent years. Overall, the U.S. military has reduced its size by some 50 percent over the past 15 years, the Admiral emphasized. As for training, Admiral Fallon noted that in the near future the U.S. would conduct training exercises with Asian allies in Thailand. To promote transparency, the PRC has been invited as an observer, Admiral Fallon said.

Openness and Transparency

19. (SBU) Admiral Fallon used a question about what qualities are most important in young people as a springboard to urge the students to seek out multiple sources of information as they learn about the world. The amount of information available via the Internet, books and other media is tremendous nowadays, the Admiral said. But students should be skeptics and not trust everything they see and hear. They should seek the broadest array of opinions when making decisions. In this context, the Admiral went on to make a separate point about transparency. He presented Europe as an example, where despite past differences, the militaries are open with each other about even obscure details such as spending programs. This has allowed them to build confidence and tackle bigger

challenges. Similarly, the Admiral urged more openness and transparency in the Chinese military. This would build confidence with other countries. "That way people could relax and move on to more important issues," he concluded.

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